

Mayor's Council on Disability
Chattanooga, Tennessee
Meeting Minutes
April 03, 2006

A wonderful kick-off celebration of the Mayor's Council on Disability was held with a follow-up meeting of the Council on Monday, April 03, 2006, at 10:30am, in room 1A of the Development Resource Center. Chair Sandy Booher welcomed everyone and introduced Mayor Ron Littlefield who shared comments on how the Council on Disability got started. Mayor Littlefield shared his vision for the Council and the need for a network of people and organizations to work together for this effort to be successful. The Mayor reminded us of the first Go-Fest Celebration that was held October 2005 and stated that this event will be an annual celebration of abilities.

Chair Booher began the Council meeting by requesting members to introduce themselves: Jennifer Nichols, Signal Centers special project to help raise public awareness; Karl Epperson, chairman of public education committee; Jill Hindman, local disability advocate; Dr. Rick Rader, chair of the health subcommittee; Bea Lyons, vice-chair of the Council and long time advocate for Deaf and hard of hearing citizens interested in accessibility; Kathy Purnell, a new member from UTC; Gina Turley, AIM Center; Susan Crisp, Chattanooga Parks and Recreation Department; Virginia Piper, parent of two children with disabilities; Jim Queen, manager of CARTA Caravan Division; Mary Ann Schenk, special advocate with the ARC of Tennessee; Philip Stevens, mayor's office working with new web site; Matt Lea, Council liaison for mayor's office; Michelle Michaud, Council liaison for mayor's office; and Richard Parker, member interested in employment issues.

Ms. Michaud recognized participants present who worked with Go-Fest and mentioned that Friends of the Festival will be assisting with the 2006 Go-Fest Celebration. The Go-Fest web site is up and running: www.gofest.info, and the event will be held Saturday, October 14, 12:00noon until 6:00pm, at the Tennessee Pavilion. Contact the mayor's office for more information at 425-7800.

Council officers shared a few words about the importance of this Council on Disability and what it means to them. Jill Hindman shared her decade of hard work trying to get this Council started and her excitement about the progress being made for people with disabilities; she mentioned UTC and their hope to possibly create a disability studies program, the CARTA Board of Directors, and the Developmental Disabilities Council. She also shared that a new initiative is being started nationally to create stigma free zones, and Chattanooga is being considered as a prime candidate for this declaration. Karl Epperson is excited about the Council and the opportunity to provide awareness in the schools, citing his plans to visit Howard High School. Bea Lyons is looking forward to the opportunity of having full access to city events and activities and to being able to attend the City Council meetings. She stated that people with hearing loss need communication access such as the real-time captioning or sign language interpreting.

Chair Booher reminded us that ADA, the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed 16 years ago. She recognized Miss Wheelchair Tennessee, Shannon Allen, who is present for today's celebration.

Announcements included the following:

Tennessee Disability Mega Conference will be held June 15-18, 2006; the ARC of Tennessee is one of the sponsors.

City Parks and Recreation Department is sponsoring a two-week camp for kids with disability; check the web site, www.chattanooga.gov or call 697-1345 for more information. There is an opportunity for internship for recreation therapy in the department also.

Creative Discovery Museum has two events: Friends Discovery Camp for kids with autism, July 17-21, and July 24-28, 2006; and the annual Kids Like Me program will be held September 25 – October 21, 2006.

Orange Grove Center represents Chattanooga on the Surgeon General's Call to Action improving the lives of people with disability in

Washington, DC.

Tom Dugan, CARTA, commended and thanked the Council members for their willingness to serve.

Following the announcements, the Council on Disability began their meeting. Chair Booher called the meeting to order with request for approval of the March meeting minutes. Bea Lyons stated that the official name of the Council, the Mayor's Council on Disability, will be changed on all previous meeting minutes as well as for the March 06, 2006 minutes. Council members approved the minutes as corrected.

Ms Booher led a discussion on the mission statement for the Council. The following mission statement was accepted:

"The Mayor's Council on Disability is an advisory group of Chattanoogaans providing direction and guidance to the Mayor and Chattanooga City Council by advocating policies, programs, practices and procedures that give equal opportunity for all individuals with disabilities; and by empowering individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, inclusion and integration into all aspects of society."

Chair Booher added Jim Queen to the Bylaws Committee to serve with Jill Hindman and Bea Lyons in developing appropriate bylaws for the Council. The committee will plan to meet before the next Council meeting.

The Council reviewed the priority list of projects that was prepared by the officers. The list includes web site for Council on Disability, training for City Codes Enforcement Department inspectors, Emergency Management Services and access to services by people with disabilities, Effective Communication Alternatives, and Neighborhood meetings to encourage input on important issues from citizens. The Council web site is well on its way to being developed. Planning for the Codes Enforcement inspectors training is in process. There is need for recruitment of citizens with disabilities to assist the Hamilton County Emergency Services folks with ensuring that all citizens have access during times of emergency. The Council

accessibility committee may be the appropriate place to begin. There is need for effective communication alternatives for public meetings and the City Council meetings. And finally, the Council would like to conduct neighborhood meetings where citizens can share their concerns. Matt Lea suggested that the neighborhood meetings be tied to the City Council town meetings where the City Council representatives may participate.

Jill Hindman reported on the recent Go-Fest Planning Committee meeting where they are still looking for a drawing attraction for the event. The date for the 2006 Go-Fest Celebration stands at Saturday, October 14, 2006, from 12:00noon until 6:00pm. The Council on Disability can provide much help in planning for this year's event.

Philip Stevens, Assistant Call Center Coordinator for the 311 Center, introduced the Council web site, www.mcd@chattanooga.gov , describing the content that will be placed on the site. The web site will be easily accessible with place for Council meetings' information, for name of contact for community, for issues and concerns needing to be addressed, and for Council special events. There is no dedicated telephone line to be used by citizens to request accessibility at this time; however, residents can contact the 311 Center for assistance between 8:00am and 6:00pm. For requesting reasonable accommodations for City Council meeting, contact the City Council Office directly.

Ms Booher shared the Wounded Warrior Project with the Council. The project is trying to raise awareness and funds for soldiers who are becoming disabled in Iraq and other recent wars. The group will be coming to Chattanooga May 30-31.

Announcements included the following:

Tennessee Miss Wheelchair Organization is looking for contestants interested in competing in the pageant to be held in Nashville during the first weekend in October. Go to the web site, www.misswheelchairtennessee.org , for more information.

National Association for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) has published a report card with Tennessee earning a grade of C+. It appears that we have a lot of work ahead of us. The whole country scored poorly on the report card.

The next meeting of the Mayor's Council on Disability will be held Monday, May 01, 2006, at 3:00pm, in Room 1A, in the Development Resource Center, located at 1250 Market Street.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45am.

Respectfully submitted,

Bea Lyons

Beatrice Lyons, Vice-Chair/Acting Secretary
Mayor's Council on Disability
Chattanooga, TN

